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Q1(e)

Comment on the growing assertion of tribal community for autonomy in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Tribal communities in India

Tribal communities in India: Definitional problems; Geographical spread; Colonial policies and tribes; Issues of integration and autonomy.

Core demand of the question

- Comment on the growing assertion of tribal community for autonomy in India
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Tribal autonomy grew against assimilation and resource displacement.

Schedules, statehood and councils are constitutional paths.

PESA and FRA are local self-rule tools, unevenly used.

Armed conflict appears where the state is extractive first.

Autonomy is citizenship with land, not exit from India.

Introduction

Tribal assertion for autonomy is a claim to land, language, and self-rule inside the republic. It has grown as mines, dams, and parties meet older Fifth and **Sixth Schedule** promises.

Body

Why assertion grew

- G. S. Ghurye's assimilation thesis treated tribe as a backward Hindu. Movements reply with a distinct political people, closer to Elwin's protective instinct and to Nehruvian Panchsheel in words, not always in mines.
- Land alienation in Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh turns development into dispossession.
- Statehood, autonomous councils, and identity parties made autonomy a constitutional language, not only a revolt.

Forms

- **Sixth Schedule** councils in the Northeast, Bodoland-type arrangements, and Jharkhand's long statehood movement show legal-political paths.
- **PESA and the Forest Rights Act** are village-level autonomy tools, still weakly implemented.
- Armed and extra-legal paths exist where the state arrives as Forest Department and paramilitary first.

Sociological reading

- Autonomy fails when integration means a labour reserve for national growth.

- It is strongest where title, council, and school sit with the community.

Flow diagram

Displacement mines dams -> Autonomy assertion
Autonomy assertion -> Schedules statehood PESA FRA
Ghurje assimilation -> Autonomy assertion

Conclusion

- **Growing tribal autonomy assertion is a citizenship demand:** stay on land with voice. Law names Schedules, **PESA**, and FRA. Power on the ground still often names the mine.

Facts & figures

Sixth Schedule

Constitutional autonomous councils for specified tribal areas in the Northeast.

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA)

1996 law vesting Gram Sabha powers in scheduled areas.

Forest Rights Act

2006 recognition of forest dwellers' titles.

Jharkhand movement

Long assertion that statehood should match Adivasi land and identity.

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